

TOWN OF EGREMONT, MASSACHUSETTS  
AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT (ARPA) ORIENTATION SESSION  
MINUTES

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Date: October 19, 2021

Time: 6:00pm

Place: Via Zoom Meeting  
Egremont

Present at the meeting in town hall and hosting the zoom meeting was Office Administrator Mary Brazie. Present at the meeting via zoom were ARPA Administrator Peg McDonough, Selectboard Chairman George McGurn, Selectboard Vice-chair Lucinda Vermeulen, Mark Roggen, Eileen Vining, Mitchell Smilowitz, Linda Noonan, Council on Aging Chairman Bruce Bernstein, Historical Commission member Barbara Kalish, Jeff and Betty Nathan, joining at 6:38pm was Marj Wexler.

The meeting was audio and video recorded.

Mary Brazie welcomed all attendees, spelled out the rules for speaking and introduced ARPA Administrator Peg McDonough.

Peg McDonough reviewed a power point presentation (attached) in which she introduced the American Rescue Act Plan (ARPA), from which the Town will get \$360,183.20, \$180,092 which is already in hand and the balance to be paid to the Town in the summer of 2022. She outlined the compliance and reporting requirements and time frame for spending, listed the eligible uses and the ineligible uses and noted the impact that this can have in conjunction with three other important grants the Town has recently received; the Municipal Vulnerability Program, Master Plan Update, and Open Space & Recreation Plan update. She also reported on the survey conducted, which 120 people responded to, and the top 5 priorities people wanted.

Questions from the public:

Was the survey available to those with no computer or internet access? Yes, a printed copy was sent in the most recent town newsletter.

Next steps? The immediate next step is to find out what the community wants and get a list of wants/needs for town departments.

It was clarified that the Selectboard will be the decision maker on how the funds are actually expended.

Can assistance be given to those who cannot afford broadband? The ARPA guidelines are not clear on this issue, though broadband infrastructure is a priority eligible use of the funds. Lucinda Vermeulen reported that shortly information would be out to the public about how to get a low income subsidy from Fiber Connect. She noted that there is also a 50% discount on installation until October 31, 2021. A clarifying question was asked if ARPA could assist households with the payments. Mary Brazie read the eligibility paragraph from the instructions

which does not make it clear. It does make clear that infrastructure build out in unserved areas is a covered expenditure. Mary McGurn noted that if the federal infrastructure bill ever gets finalized there will be funds specifically earmarked for the purpose of helping households with the cost of internet. Bruce Bernstein asked if ARPA could help those seniors who have no equipment or education to use the internet. Peg McDonough will follow up.

It was clarified that the process is that town departments let the Selectboard know what projects they have that may be paid for with the ARPA funds and then the Selectboard approves those expenditures.

Support for non-profits is a part of the ARP program. As is support for housing and food insecurity.

Lucinda Vermeulen urged those in attendance to help to improve participation by voters and residents by sharing information. The upcoming Master Plan update is very important as it will map out what the town will look like in the future. Barbara Kalish noted that success depends on getting the word out and asked how that is done. Mary Brazie replied that information is sent out via emails, in the printed newsletter which is emailed and mailed, posting in local places and can be done via phone calls.

In closing it was pointed out that the ARPA will be plugged in with the three important grant programs taking place in Egremont right now, MVP, Master Plan update and Open Space & Recreation update, and it has been made clear that better outreach is needed.

Session closed at 6:50pm

Mary Brazie,  
Office Administrator

minutes.22/oct19arpa

*The recording of the minutes is on record at the Town Hall for 90 days. Anyone who wishes to may obtain a copy or listen to the recording at Town Hall. Attachments are on file at Town Hall.*